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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR INPUTTING USER COMMANDS TO A PROCESSOR

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to devices configured to receive a user input.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Entering data into a data processing device is accomplished using a data
5 input device such as a keyboard, mouse, or joystick. Although electronic devices
are constantly being miniaturized, the size of the various associated data input
devices cannot be substantially decreased since they must conform to the size of
the user's hands. Methods for inputting data have therefore been devised in
which the user's hands do not have to touch the device. US Patent Nos.
10 5,767,842 to Korth, and 6,650,318 to Arnon for example, disclose an optical
system in which a camera is used to monitor a user's hand and finger motions. A
software application interprets these motions as operations on a physically non-
existent computer keyboard or other input device. In these systems, the camera
has a fixed position, so that the background of the images remains constant. This
15 allows the software application to make use of informational present in the
constant background in order to detect the user's hands in each image. This
system, therefore, cannot be used in a device that in use is moved, because in this
case, the background of the images is not constant, so there is no reliable
background information in the images. Devices that are moved in use include
20 hand-held devices such as a palm plot, personal digital assistant (PDA), a mobile
telephone, a digital camera, and a mobile game machine.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method and system for inputting operating system (OS) commands to a data processing device. The system of the invention may be used to input OS commands to the device instead of or in
5 addition to any input devices associated with the device such as a keyboard, mouse or joystick. The system of the invention may be used in any type of data processing device such as a personal computer (PC), a portable computer such as a PDA, a laptop or a palm plot, a mobile telephone, a radio or other entertainment device, a vehicle, a digital camera, a mobile game machine, a
10 computerized medical device and a smart house product.

The system of the invention comprises a video camera and a processor. The camera is positioned to capture images in a viewing space. Images captured by the camera are digitized by the camera and input to the processor. The processor is configured to run a software application that analyzes images
15 captured by the camera, preferably in real time. The analysis performed by the software application includes detecting in an image obtained at a time t_k a predetermined object in the viewing space of the camera. The object may be, for example, one or more fingers of a user or a hand held stylus.

In accordance with the invention, detecting the object in an image is done
20 using an algorithm that does not rely on background information present in the image. By not relying on background information in an image, the system of the invention may be used in devices that are moved in use. For example, the object may be detected in an image using a segmentation algorithm. Methods for segmentation are disclosed, for example, in Gonzalez, R. C. and Woods, R. E.
25 [2002]. *Digital Image Processing*, 2nd ed., Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, N.J.; R. Gonzalez, "Digital Image Processing using Matlab", Pearson Prentice Hall 2004; and in Sigal, L et al "Estimation and Prediction of Evolving Color Distributions for Skin Segmentation Under Varying Illumination", BU CS TR99-015.v2, Dec. 1999 (revised in March 2000). Any type of segmentation algorithm

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may be used in the system of the invention, such as a "WaterShed" segmentation or a "growing region segmentation", as is known in the art.

A segmentation algorithm is a multi-staged process, where at each stage the image is binarized into set of pixels having intensity (for example, either on a gray level scale or any one or more of a red, green or blue scale) below a particular threshold and the set of pixels having intensity above the threshold. At each stage, the threshold is incremented and contiguous sets of pixels in each set are identified. At the end of the process, stable sets of contiguous points are identified. A stable set of contiguous pixels is a set that remained constant during a predetermined number of consecutive stages of the process. After the stable contiguous sets of pixels have been identified in the image, an object recognition procedure is performed on the stable sets to identify the object among the stable sets. The object recognition procedure makes use of previously obtained image data relating to features of the object such as its eccentricity or dimensions. The same previously obtained image data may be applied to each image, or the image data may be updated on the basis of recent earlier images of the object. Any object recognition procedure may be applied to the stable sets. For example, an adaptive linear combination may be calculated of one or more of the features of the object and applied to each of the stable sets.

The software application also extracts from an image obtained at a time t_k one or more image analysis parameters $x_i(t_k)$. One or more of the image analysis parameters may be history independent, such as the pixel address in the image of the tip or width of the object in pixels in the image, the length in pixels of the object in the image, or the orientation of the object in the image. One or more of the image analysis parameters may be history dependent, in which case extraction of the parameters is performed on the image together with previously and/or subsequently obtained images. Such history dependent parameters include the speed of the object at the time of the image, the change in the size of the width of the object at the time of the image, or the rate and direction of rotation of the object at the time of the image. One or more of the image analysis

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parameters may be binary parameters. For example, a parameter may take on the value 1 if the object is detected in the viewing space and the value 0 if the object is not detected in the viewing space. The analysis of the software thus generates a time sequence of vectors $\mathbf{X}(t_k) = \{x_1(t_k), \dots, x_n(t_k)\}$ that is stored in the memory.

5 The software is further configured to apply one or more motion detection tests to one or more of the vectors \mathbf{X} obtained in a recent time window and stored in the memory. The time window may be, for example 0.5 sec, or 1 sec. Each test detects a specific type of motion of the object during the time window. A test may be a binary test, in which case the result of the test is an indication 0 that the
10 test failed (i.e. the object did not perform the motion detected by the test during the time window) or an indication 1 that the test succeeded it (i.e. the object performed the motion detected by the test). Alternatively, the result of a test may be a number between 0 and 1. One or more of the tests may be defined as a linear combination of previously defined tests. In these cases, determining whether a
15 test succeeds or fails may be performed, for example, using a state machine, morphological algorithms, or a neural network.

As a first example, a test may be, for example, that during the time window the object approached the camera. This test succeeds if the width of the object in pixels increased during the time window. As a second example, a test
20 may be for example that the object moved away from the camera (the width of the object in pixels decreased during the time window). Other examples of tests include that the object first approached the camera and then moved away from the camera during the time window, the object disappeared from viewing space of the camera, the object moved in a predetermined path such as in a circle or so
25 as to trace an alphanumeric character, the object rotated, the object was stationary, the object moved (performed any type of motion), the object performed a flicking motion, the object accelerated, the object decelerated, the object moved and then stopped, or the object remained stationary at a particular location for predetermined amount of time..

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The memory of the system stores a look-up table that provides, for each test an associated OS command. When a test succeeds, the OS command associated with the test is executed. The OS commands may be, for example, depressing a virtual key displayed on the display screen, moving a cursor
5 appearing on the display screen to a new location on the screen, running on the processor a software application stored in the memory, turning on or off a light associated with the device, changing the sound level or station on a radio, or turning off the device, zooming in or out of an image displayed on a screen, controlling a surgical instrument, and sending a command to an application (eg.
10 sending a “*shooting*” command to a game applicaton).

Preferably, there is an intuitive relationship between the motion detected by a test and the OS command associated with the test. The following are examples of an intuitive relationship between a motion detected by a test and the associated OS command.

15 A test that detects that the object moved towards the camera and then moved away from the camera may have an associated OS command of depressing a key on a virtual keyboard to which a cursor on the screen is presently pointing.

A test that detects a linear movement of the object across the viewing
20 space may have an associated OS command of dragging an object such as a cursor to a new location on the display screen.

A test that detects whether the object has traced out a path in the viewing space of the camera in the shape of a particular alphanumeric character may have an associated OS command of depressing a key on a virtual keyboard displayed
25 on a display of the device for that alphanumeric character.

A test that detects a “*shooting motion*” of the object may have an associated OS command of “*shooting*” at a target appearing on the display.

A test detecting a flicking motion of the object may have an associated OS command of turning off the device.

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The system of the invention may be used in devices adapted to be worn, such as a pendent or goggles. The system allows OS commands to be input to the device without touching the device. The device is thus of benefit to users whose hands are soiled, such as technicians, cooks, and surgeons. The system may also
5 be used in devices having one or more 3-dimensional virtual objects.

Thus, in its first aspect, the invention provides a system for inputting operation system (OS) commands to a data processing device comprising:

- (a) a video camera capturing images of a viewing space; and
- (b) a processor configured to:
 - 10 i) detect a predetermined object in one or more images obtained by the camera using an object recognition algorithm not involving background information in an image;
 - ii) extract one or more image analysis parameters of the object in the one or more images obtained by the camera; and
 - 15 iii) for each of one or more motion detection tests:
 - (I) applying the motion detection test to image analysis parameters extracted during a recent time window; and
 - (II) executing an operating system command associated with the motion detection test if the motion detection test succeeds.

20 In its second aspect, the invention provides a data processing device comprising the system for inputting operation system (OS) commands of the invention.

In its third aspect, the invention provides a method for inputting operation system (OS) commands to a data processing device having a video camera
25 capturing images of a viewing space, comprising:

- a. detecting a predetermined object in one or more images obtained by the camera using an object recognition algorithm not involving background information of an image;

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- b. extracting one or more image analysis parameters of the object in the one or more images obtained by the camera ; and
- c. for each of one or more motion detection tests:
 - 5 i. applying the motion detection test to image analysis parameters extracted during a recent time window; and
 - ii. executing an operating system command associated with the motion detection test if the
 - 10 motion detection test succeeds.

In its fourth aspect, the invention provides a computer program comprising computer program code means for performing all the steps of the method of the invention.

15 In its fifth aspect, the invention provides a computer program of the invention embodied on a computer readable medium.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In order to understand the invention and to see how it may be carried out in practice, a preferred embodiment will now be described, by way of non-
20 limiting example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 shows a device having a system for inputting OS commands to a data processing device in accordance with one embodiment of the invention; and

Fig. 2 shows a method for inputting OS commands to a data processing device in accordance with the method of the invention.

25 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Fig. 1 shows a data processing device 2 in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. The data processing device 2 may be, for example,

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a personal computer (PC), a portable computer such as a PDA, a laptop or a palm plot, or a mobile telephone, a radio or other entertainment device, a vehicle, a digital camera or a mobile game machine. The device 2 has a video camera 6. The device 2 may also be provided with a display screen 4 and various data input
5 devices such as a keypad 8 having a plurality of keys 10 for inputting data into the data input device 2.

The device 2 has a processor 12 inside housing 14. The processor 12 is configured to receive data from the camera 6 and any other input devices associated with the device 2 such as the keypad 8.

10 The camera 6 views a conical or pyramidal volume of space 16 indicated by the broken lines. The camera 6 may have a fixed position on the device 2, in which case the viewing space 16 is fixed relative to the device 2, or may be positionable on the device 2, in which case the viewing space 16 is selectable relative to the device 2. Images captured by the camera 6 are digitized by the
15 camera 6 and input to the processor 12.

The processor 12 is configured to run a software application that analyzes images captured by the camera 6. The analysis performed by the software application includes detecting in an image obtained at a time t_k a predetermined object 24 in the viewing space 16. As explained above the object 24 is detected
20 using an object recognition algorithm that does not involve background information of the image, for example, by using a segmentation algorithm. The object 24 may be for example a finger of a user as shown in Fig. 2. Alternatively, the object may be a hand held stylus (not shown). The object 24 has a length and orientation in the viewing space represented by means of a
25 vector 27 having a tip 25 at a free end of the object 24. The object 24 also has a width 23. The user may use his other hand 19 to hold the device 2 in use, if the device 2 is a hand-held device. The hand 19 may also be used to activate real input devices associated with the device 2, such as activating keys 10 on the keypad 8.

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The software application is further configured to extract from an image obtained at a time t_k one or more image analysis parameters $x_i(t_k)$. One or more of the image analysis parameters may be history independent, such as the pixel address in the image of the tip **25**, the width **23** of the object **24** in pixels in the image, the length in pixels of the object **24** in the image, or the angle that the vector **27** makes in the image with a fixed direction. One or more of the image analysis parameters may be history dependent, in which case extraction of the parameters is performed on the image together with previously and/or subsequently obtained images. Such history dependent parameters include the speed of the tip **25** at the time t_k of the image, the change in the size of the width **23** of the object **24** at the time of the image, or the rate of rotation of the vector **27** at the time of the image. One or more of the image analysis parameters may be binary parameters. For example, a parameter may take on the value 1 if the object **24** is detected in the viewing space and the value 0 if the object **24** is not detected in the viewing space. The analysis of the processor thus generates a time sequence of vectors $\mathbf{X}_k = \{x_1(t_k), \dots, x_n(t_k)\}$ that is stored in the memory **16**.

The software application also applies one or more motion detection tests to one or more of the vectors \mathbf{X}_k obtained in a recent time window and stored in the memory **16**. The time window may be, for example 0.5 sec, or 1 sec. The length of the time window may be different for different tests. Each test detects a specific type of motion of the object **24** during the time window. The result of each test is an indication that the test failed (i.e. the object **24** did not perform the motion detected by the test during the time window) or an indication that the test succeeded it (i.e. the object **24** performed the motion detected by the test). As explained above, a test may or may not be a binary test. The result of test may depend upon a user input. For example, a test may give an indication of success only if the user simultaneously depressed a predetermined key on the keypad **8**.

As a first example, a test may be, for example, that during the time window the object **24** approached the camera. This test produces an indication of success if the width **23** of the object in pixels increased during the time window.

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As a second example, a test may be for example that the object moved away from the camera (the width **23** of the object in pixels decreased during the time window). Other examples of tests include that the object **24** first approached the camera and then moved away from the camera during the time window, the
5 object disappeared from viewing space **16**, the object moved in a predetermined path, the object rotated, the object was stationary, the object moved (performed any type of motion), the object performed a flicking motion, the object accelerated, the object decelerated, or the object moved and then stopped.

The memory **16** stores a look-up table that provides, for each test an
10 associated OS command. When a test succeeds, the OS command associated with the test is executed. The OS commands may be, for example, depressing a virtual key displayed on the display screen, moving a cursor appearing on the display screen to a new location on the screen, running on the processor **12** a software application stored in the memory **16**, or turning off the device **2**. The device may
15 provide an indication that the OS command was executed. For example, an OS command equivalent to depressing a key on the virtual keyboard may be indicated by briefly showing the key depressed on a virtual keyboard on the screen **4**, or by briefly changing the appearance of the key. Other possibilities for indicating that the OS command was executed include briefly enlarging or
20 otherwise changing the appearance of a depressed key or of the cursor on the screen **4**, displaying an icon on the screen **4**, producing a sound, and vibrating the device.

The viewing space **16** may be divided into two or more independent subspaces, with different tests being applied to motion of the object **24** in the
25 different subspaces.

Fig. 2 shows a flow chart for a method for inputting an OS command to a data processing device in accordance with one embodiment of the method of the invention. In step **30** an image obtained by the camera **6** is input to the memory **16** of the processor **12**. In step **31**, the predetermined object **24** is identified in the
30 image using an object recognition procedure that does not involve background

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information in the image. In step 32, one or more image analysis parameters are extracted from the image and stored in the memory 16. In step 34 a motion detection test is applied to the extracted image analysis parameters obtained during a recent time window and stored in the memory 16. In step 36 the indication of the test is determined. If the indication is "success", i.e. the test detected the type of motion detected by the test, then in step 38, the OS command associated with the test is looked up in the look-up table stored in the memory 16, and in step 40, the OS command associated with the test is executed. If at step 36 it is determined that the indication of the test is "failure", i.e. the test did not detect the type of motion detected by the test, or after step 40, if the indication of the test was 1, the process proceeds to step 42 where it is determined whether another motion test is to be applied to the image. If yes, the process returns to step 34 with another motion detection test being applied to the image. If no (i.e. all of the motion detection tests have been applied to the present time window) then the process returns to step 20 with a new image obtained by the camera 6 being input to the memory 16.

It will also be understood that the system according to the invention may be a suitably programmed computer. Likewise, the invention contemplates a computer program being readable by a computer for executing the method of the invention. The invention further contemplates a machine-readable memory tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine for executing the method of the invention.